

January 11, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PSC APPROVES FIVE NEBRASKA INTERNET ENHANCEMENT GRANTS**

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Public Service Commission approved five grants totaling nearly \$256,000 in a first-time offering from the Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund at the Commission's weekly meeting on January 11.

The grant awards culminated an eight-month process established by the Commission to administer the fund, which was established by the Nebraska Legislature to provide financial assistance to communities in the provision of internet and advanced telecommunications services. Such services are particularly costly in Nebraska due to factors that include population scarcity and location remoteness.

Eight proposals for funding were received by the Commission in a pre-application process that extended through the past summer. An advisory board appointed by the Commission then pared the proposals to five for the final round of applications. On December 15, the advisory board evaluated the proposals and recommended funding for all five finalists.

The entities receiving grants, the county seat where applicable, and the amount of the grants are as follows:

- Box Butte County Commissioners, Alliance, \$50,000;
- Cheyenne County Commissioners, Sidney, \$50,000
- City of Chappell, \$29,700;
- Dawes County Commissioners, Chadron, \$50,000, and
- Nemaha County Development Alliance, Auburn, \$76,246.47.

Money for the Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund came from a seed appropriation by the Legislature and continues to be generated from a share of profits from the leasing of publicly owned fiber optic cable.

###